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FM AMEMBASSY RIGA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5680
INFO RUEHCP/AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN 1024

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STATE FOR OES/STC EILEEN KANE

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [ENRG](#) [SENV](#) [AMGT](#) [APER](#) [LG](#)
SUBJECT: Embassy Science Fellows Program 2009 (Latvia)

Ref: STATE 10843

¶1. Embassy Riga submits the following proposal for an Embassy Science Fellow (ESF) to assist Latvia in developing forest biomass energy potential. The ESF will work with the Latvian Ministry of Agriculture, in coordination with the Latvian State Forest Research Institute, Forest and Wood Products Research and Development Institute, Forest Faculty of the Latvia University of Agriculture, and the Institute of Physical Energetics. Timing of the fellowship is flexible. The ideal fellow would be an engineer or researcher familiar with the technical and practical aspects of biomass energy generation. Security clearance will not be required.

¶2. Proposal: Latvia is a net importer of energy. Outside of several aging hydro-electric plants, the country has scarce internal energy resources. As a result, Latvia imports gas and electricity from neighboring states. When the Ignalina Nuclear Power Plant is decommissioned at the end of 2009, the region's energy shortfall will increase significantly. At the same time, Latvia exports wood chips and other biomass products, and is still far from fully utilizing its forest resources. The GOL has approached the USG about developing a memorandum of understanding to collaborate on biomass energy research. While a potential MOU is still under discussion, the GOL request highlights their desire to work together on this issue. The Embassy Science Fellow program would be an excellent way to develop a basis for future cooperation, and would have positive side effects for USG objectives with regard to economic ties and regional security.

There are a variety of Latvian institutions that would benefit from advice and collaboration with an ESF. Each of the following institutions has expressed their interest in hosting an ESF. A Fellow either working closely with any one institution would be ideal, but depending on expertise, a fellow consulting more broadly with all institutions could be useful. All work would be under the overall coordination of the Ministry of Agriculture.

* The Latvian State Forests Research Institute, known as "Silava" studies the potential of both wood biomass and biomass grown in ditches and roadsides in their extensive network of forest land.

* The Latvian State Institute of Wood Chemistry works on a variety of research projects involving bioreactor design and materials research.

* The work of the Forest and Wood Products Research and Development Institute involves applied research and technology issues of wood and wood based products, forestry logistics, testing required for product conformity attestation according to European and national standards, and development of new products.

* The Institute of Physical Energetics is Latvia's leading research organization, across the spectrum of energy generation and transmission. Their Laboratory of Energy Resources investigates local renewable resources, including biomass residue and energy crop availability and use.

¶3. Post will provide support as indicated in Ref A, including

housing, official in-country travel as approved by the Management officer, and administrative support. Office space, including high-speed internet access, will be provided by the Ministry of Agriculture or other institutions working with the ESF, or by Post, as appropriate. MGMT has cleared this proposal.

¶4. The RSO has cleared this proposal.

¶5. The point of contact for this proposal is Political and Economic Officer Matt Stokes (email:stokesmr@state.gov, telephone: +371-6703-6287). The alternate point of contact is Acting Political and Economic Chief Joe Babb (email: BabbJR@state.gov, telephone: +371-6703-6227).

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